

Agricultural Commission Meeting

October 30, 2013

Attending: Peter Maggio, Jennifer Brown, Dave Sheldon, Carla Turner, Elizabeth Keen

Open Meeting at 7:10.

1. Secretaries report from July 10th was approved.
2. We had invited Luke Pryma to speak, but as Carla and Elizabeth were at the community meeting of Keep Berkshires Farming just a few days ago it was decided not to bring Luke in. Maybe in the future.
3. Update on Keep Berkshires Farming. Held a Community Forum on October 24th at the 1st Congregational Church in GB. Findings and some analysis were presented. Over the last year KBF has held a series of workshop/meetings/info sessions on areas of interest developed from the surveys with farmers and community members. One was on meat processing/value added and the other marketing. They also are looking at issues of farmland transfer and succession, farmer networking, land access etc. KBF extended its reach into Central and North County too. Their chief goal and success to date has been to bring the issues to forefront and to forge connections among the community. Indeed that is how solutions to the problems that agriculture faces in Berkshire County will be solved. We did get to hear from Penny representing Gideon's Garden—provides food to the People's Pantry and from Janet Elsbach who now owns the fairgrounds. Not sure of formal plan at this point for future activity.
4. Newsletter. No article for # 71 or 72. #73 is next. Jennifer Brown will do by November 20th. Subject will be about Mt. Everett students and graduates doing in agriculturally focused activities.
5. Mass. Farm Bureau and Ag. Comms. Egremont Agricultural Commission is a free member.
6. Mass Ag. in the Classroom. They are asking for their annual \$50.00 donation. We approved. Dave will let Mary know to allocate the funds.
7. Egremont Ag. Commission Annual Report FY13 article was submitted. Dave and Elizabeth worked on this.
8. Veterinary Drug Letter. Carla brought this up an previous meeting. She contacted a local vet and decided no letter was needed.
9. Agricultural Plastic Waste. Carla brought to our attention a collective of folks in eastern MA that are taking plastic waste to facility for recycling. Could be great to have around here. Last year the Turners paid \$3000 to dispose of plastic. Elizabeth was also sent some info about this from a colleague. Elizabeth will speak to Elizabeth Olenbush and Carla will speak to Jess Cook at MDAR and Juliet Haas about this.

10. Complaint from Brian Burlarley on October 2, 2013. Dave Divine's chickens are getting onto his property. A second complaint was made on October 30th. Dave Sheldon told Dave Divine that he had to keep his chickens on his land and penned in. This conversation led us to talk about other loose animals. Rich Ciatola who is now farming at the old Farm Girl Farm location had a loose cow and pig this summer. The Turners were called. We discussed that there is no roster at the town indicating who has animals. The police have no idea whose animals they may be when doing rounds. Dave will ask Mary about this and see if the town can't have a better idea of who has what animals where.

11. The Massachusetts Association of Ag. Comms will hold its annual meetings December 7th at Hancock Shaker Village and January 11th in Northampton. This year KBF will be doing a number of workshops there. Elizabeth/Dave will try to attend the January conference.

12. "Farming our Future" a conference will be held February 22 in Hillsdale, NY.

13. We discussed how the Egremont Ag. Commission can help facilitate educational field trips to local farms. We spoke about this generally and also in light of the grant money available through the MA. Association of Ag. Comms. The deadline is December 6th. We decided to table any decision on this for a future date and we will not be applying for any funds at this time. Elizabeth will meet the teachers of the Egremont School and Carla will meet with the FFA advisor Danielle at Mt. Everett. We also were wondering what Sheffield Ag. Comm did with their funds last year.

14. We will ask again for \$400 in FY14. Dave will follow up.

15. Ethics Commission. We are all to go to muniprogram.eth.state.ma.us to take Ethics Test again.

16. Dave showed the Hoard's Dairyman article. Rhett was featured.

17. All Town Department Meeting. Carla attended. The Berkshire Emergency Management brought to Carla's attention that they would like to know how many chickens are in Egremont in the event of an avian flu epidemic. We think the animal control officer should do it. Doesn't really fall under our responsibility. Dave will talk to Mary. We also discussed the animal exise tax which doesn't seem to be fairly collected.

18. Next meeting January 15th, 2014.

19. Adjourned

Respectfully submitted by,

Elizabeth Keen